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RUEHDN/AMCONSUL SYDNEY 5062
RHMCSUU/FAA NATIONAL HQ WASHINGTON DC
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SENSITIVE
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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/ANP, EEB/TRA
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION FOR ELIE NASR
(INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL SUPPORT BRANCH/FLIGHT STANDARDS
SERVICE)

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: FAA'S UPCOMING ASSESSMENT OF AUSTRALIAN CIVIL
AVIATION

REF: STATE 119313

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Australian aviation authorities will release a statement on the FAA's upcoming assessment of Australia's civil aviation, which is scheduled for November 30 - December 4 (reftel). The government release will be out in the next day and could be in the press as early as Friday, November 27. Post would appreciate press guidance in case this becomes an issue. End Summary.

2. (SBU) Terry Farquharson, head of the host delegation from the Australian Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), alerted Econoff November 25 that the office of Minister Albanese (Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, which oversees CASA) had decided, against CASA's recommendation, to carry out a press release regarding the upcoming FAA assessment. In the coming day, CASA will post the statement (a draft of which Farquharson read to Econoff) on its website and will conduct an interview with a reporter, with a strong possibility that an article may appear in the aviation section of "The Australian" newspaper's Friday edition. It should be noted that the draft release did not contain anything controversial and points out that the assessment visit is being conducted at the request of CASA.

3. (SBU) CASA's view is that the press exposure may unnecessarily complicate the conduct of the assessment, given that at its core, the assessment is an attempt to clear the record from a previous audit in which several shortcomings were identified (see reftel). The Ministry's office preferred to carry out the release for the sake of transparency and in order to preempt after-the-fact questioning of what the Minister knew or did not know prior to the FAA teams arrival.

4. (SBU) Comment: We are in close contact with both FAA and CASA and are facilitating final coordination of the visit. We do not anticipate this media release will become a problem, but do expect questions from the press. We would appreciate press guidance from the Department and/or FAA.

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